

Veterinary Services Pseudorabies Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is pseudorabies?

A: Pseudorabies is a disease of swine that can also affect cattle, horses, dogs, cats, sheep, and goats. The disease is caused by pseudorabies virus (PRV), an extremely contagious herpesvirus that causes reproductive problems, including abortion, stillbirths, and even occasional death losses in breeding and finishing hogs.

Q: Is PRV contagious to humans?

A: No. The virus has never been shown to be contagious to humans, not even to people working on farms with many PRV-infected animals.

Q: How is the virus spread?

A: PRV is primarily spread through direct animal-to-animal (or nose-to-nose) contact between an infected and shedding pig and a noninfected pig. If present on inanimate objects, such as boots, clothing, feed, trucks, and equipment, the virus can also spread from herd to herd and farm to farm.

Q: How can pseudorabies be prevented?

A: Pseudorabies can be prevented primarily through good, tight biosecurity, a sound vaccination program, and thorough, meticulous management with disease control and prevention in mind.

Q: How long has the virus existed in the United States?

A: PRV is known to have existed in the United States for at least 150 years.

Q: What is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) pseudorabies eradication program?

A: USDA established a voluntary eradication program for pseudorabies in the United States in 1989. The program is cooperative in nature and involves Federal, State, and industry participation. USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) coordinates the national pseudorabies eradication program, State governments promulgate and enforce the intrastate regulations, and producers contribute by having their herds tested and instituting control and eradication measures. The program's primary activities include surveillance, herd monitoring, and herd cleanup. On December 24, Secretary Glickman made an announcement accelerating this effort.

Q: How many States are pseudorabies free?

A: Currently, all 50 States are considered free of PRV in commercial production swine herds, those herds which have adequate measures in place to prevent contact and potential infection from feral and transitional production swine, known potential carriers of the PRV virus.

Q: How is a herd determined to be pseudorabies infected?

A: A pseudorabies-infected herd contains animals that have tested positive serologically or have had the virus isolated in an official test conducted by an approved laboratory.

Q: How many herds are still infected with the virus and in what States?

A: No commercial production herds have been found to be infected with PRV since early 2003. Sporadic infections have been found in transitional production herds, those swine which are captured feral swine, or have the potential to come in contact with feral swine. Any infected transitional herds have been promptly depopulated when found, and intense epidemiological investigations have been conducted to ascertain that no viral spread to commercial production swine has occurred.

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